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**CHECKLIST & TABLE OF CONTENTS**

**APPLICANT:** Town of Bel Air

**NAME OF SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY:** Bel Air

**Please review the checklist of attachments and furnish all of the attachments that are applicable. Contents of the notebook should be tabbed and organized as follows:**

- ☐ **TAB #1     Applicant Information**
- ☐ **TAB #2     Sustainable Community Baseline Information - In addition to hard copies of the project location map, a detailed listing of parcels (i.e. Parcel ID Numbers) that form the project boundary should be included. Maps should also be submitted in electronic GIS form (shape file). If you have additional comments or questions, please contact Brad Wolters, Senior GIS Specialist, DHCD, wolters@mdhousing.org.**
- ☐ **TAB #3     Local Capacity to Implement Plans & Projects: Attach Sustainable Communities Workgroup roster noted in Section III**
- ☐ **TAB #4     Sustainable Community Plan**
- ☐ **TAB #5     Progress Measures**
- ☐ **TAB #6     Local Support Resolution**
- ☐ **TAB #7     Signed Sustainable Community Application Disclosure Authorization and Certification**

**All documents on this checklist are mandatory.  
Failure to provide the requested document will automatically deny your application.**

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**I. SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY APPLICANT INFORMATION****Name of Sustainable Community:** Bel Air

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**Legal Name of Applicant:** Town of Bel Air

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**Federal Identification Number:** 52-6000775

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**Street Address:** 39 N. Hickory Avenue

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<b>City:</b> Bel Air	<b>County:</b> Harford	<b>State:</b> MD	<b>Zip Code:</b> 21014
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<b>Phone No:</b> (410) 879-9500	<b>Fax:</b> (410) 838-0775	<b>Web Address:</b> www.belairmd.org
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**Sustainable Community Contact For Application Status:**

<b>Name:</b> Kevin Small	<b>Title:</b> Director of Planning
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<b>Address:</b> 705 E. Churchville Road	<b>City:</b> Bel Air	<b>State:</b> MD	<b>Zip Code:</b> 21014
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<b>Phone No:</b> 410-879-9500 x	<b>Fax:</b> 410-838-0775	<b>E-mail:</b> ksmall@belairmd.org
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**Person to be contacted for Award notification:**

<b>Name:</b> Kevin Small	<b>Title:</b> Director of Planning
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<b>Address:</b> 705 E. Churchville Road	<b>City:</b> Bel Air	<b>State:</b> MD	<b>Zip Code:</b> 21014
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<b>Phone No:</b> 410-879-9500 x	<b>Fax:</b> 410-838-0775	<b>E-mail:</b> ksmall@belairmd.org
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## **II. SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY BASELINE INFORMATION**

Through this section, applicants will demonstrate that trends and conditions in homeownership, property values, employment, commercial and residential vacancy, community facilities and infrastructure, natural resources, the local business and residential districts show a need for new or continued revitalization reinvestment. Demographic data and trends provided by Applicants should support the choice of the proposed Sustainable Community Area boundary and help form a basis for needs and opportunities to be addressed through the initiatives and projects described in the Sustainable Community Action Plan (Section IV).

POINTS IN THIS SECTION WILL BE AWARDED BASED ON THE SC AREA'S NEED FOR REINVESTMENT AS EVIDENCED BY THOROUGH DESCRIPTIONS OF CURRENT CONDITIONS OR TRENDS (and will not be based upon current or planned revitalization activities which will be covered in Section IV).

### **A. Proposed Sustainable Community Area (s):**

**County:** Harford

**Name of Sustainable Community:** Bel Air

**Include boundary descriptions and a map of the Sustainable Community. In addition to hard copies of the of the project location map, a detailed listing of parcels (i.e. Parcel ID Numbers) that form the project boundary should be included. If possible, maps should also be submitted in electronic GIS form (shape file). If you have additional comments or questions, please contact Brad Wolters, Senior GIS Specialist, DHCD, [Wolters@MdHousing.org](mailto:Wolters@MdHousing.org)**

The boundary of the Sustainable Community Area encompasses the core of downtown Bel Air including Main Street and Bond Street along with the adjacent Howard Park neighborhood and the commercial properties along US Route 1 and MD Route 22. This area is generally bounded by Linwood Avenue on the south side continuing with properties along US Route 1 and Kelly Avenue moving west and running along Gordon Street, Williams Street and Maulsby Avenue. The area covers the industrial land adjacent to Ellendale Street and includes properties along Main Street, Lee Street, and Hickory Avenue. The area continues with properties along MD Route 22, Fulford Avenue and Maitland Street.

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**II. SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY BASELINE INFORMATION**

Approximate number of acres within the SC Area: 274

Existing federal, state or local designations (check all that apply):

- |                                                             |                                                                        |
|-------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Community Legacy Area   | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Designated Neighborhood            |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Main Street             | <input type="checkbox"/> Maple Street                                  |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Local Historic District | <input type="checkbox"/> National Register Historic District           |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> A & E District          | <input type="checkbox"/> State Enterprise Zone Special Taxing District |
| <input type="checkbox"/> BRAC                               | <input type="checkbox"/> State Designated TOD                          |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other(s): _____                    |                                                                        |

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## **II. SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY BASELINE INFORMATION**

### **Prior Revitalization Investments & Smart Growth:**

**(a) List and describe any significant State and local smart growth or revitalization related program investments (for instance, Community Legacy or SC Rehab Tax Credit) that have been invested in the Area since the launching of Maryland's Smart Growth initiative and programs in 1997 (including Housing investment). What impact have these investments made in the community? (Answer Space 4,000 characters)**

Within the last decade, the Town of Bel Air has made strides in several areas of revitalization. Utilizing programs administered by DHCD (Department of Housing & Community Development), MHT (Maryland Historic Trust), and DBED (Department of Business & Economic Development), the Town has created incentives for revitalizing the commercial core of Bel Air.

- a. Main Street Maryland – Creation of the Bel Air Downtown Alliance
- b. Community Legacy – Funds and Assistance with Grants, Loans and Tax Incentives
- c. Neighborhood Business Works – Funding for Façade Improvement and Loans & Tax Incentives
- d. Maryland Historic Trust – Application of tax credits
- e. Community Development Block Grants – Funding for grants associated with community improvements

**II. SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY BASELINE INFORMATION**

**(b) Describe any existing barriers to Smart Growth that may affect your jurisdiction or the proposed SC Area. For instance, does your area have higher development fees than outer “cornfields”?**

*(Answer Space 4,000 characters)*

Barriers to Smart Growth include additional taxes levied by the Town as part of the providing services that other jurisdictions do not offer (street sweeping, trash collection, leaf collection and bulk trash pickup), lack of undeveloped property, limited variety in lot size, extended age of the infrastructure and a variety of land use options without special approvals. In addition, State mandated regulations such as Storm Water Management requirements and Forest Conservation obligations serve to push development out of urban areas.

## **II. SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY BASELINE INFORMATION**

### **B. Community Conditions: Strengths and Weaknesses**

**(1) Describe the strengths and weaknesses in the proposed Area's existing built environment. For example, what is the condition of housing? Are there underutilized historic buildings and cultural places? What is the condition and availability of community parks and recreational assets? Are there transportation assets? What is the current condition of community infrastructure such as roads and lighting? (Answer Space 4,000 characters)**

A notable weakness of the Town is the under-utilized residential neighborhood of Howard Park on the southwestern periphery of the downtown area. Howard Park is an older neighborhood with a great many absentee landlords and a number of group homes servicing drug and alcohol related illnesses. The greater designated area consists of a great many older buildings and historically significant structures which present a hurdle for rehabilitation.

There are three municipal parks (Plumtree Park, Shamrock Park & Alice Anne Park) within the designated area servicing the community. Shamrock Park consists of an outdoor amphitheater, a playground with a water drinking fountain, a small sitting area and on-street parking. This park serves as the gathering space for many Town events throughout the year including; Flag Day celebrations, Independence Day events, Memorial Day observances, Festival for the Arts, summer concerts & outdoor movies in the summer among other activities. Alice Anne Park is very small consisting of a playground, sitting area and basketball half court. Plumtree Park contains a tot lot and playground, basketball court and off-street parking. The residential and commercial areas are in need of stronger pedestrian and bicycle connections, especially across US Route 1, MD Route 22, and Main Street (MD Route 924). There is also a high priority need to connect the Ma & Pa Trail network as it runs through the Town.

Harford County Transit service links Bel Air with Aberdeen, Havre de Grace, and Edgewood. The Town-Go-Round (Orange Line) route serves to transport users internally within Bel Air proper. A more stable and better advertised system is needed to address ridership, destinations and accessibility. Awareness of transit stops, commuter opportunities (especially to Aberdeen Proving Ground) and other transit services need to be addressed.

Bel Air has 47 historically designated buildings and 338 historically inventoried buildings. These structures offer a strong link to the past and a stable anchor for future development. Building on the character and style of the architecture will be an advantage for the stability of land values and the 'sense of place' essential to a vibrant community.

There are a great many small businesses and shops within downtown and along the US Route 1 corridor. With the help of the Bel Air Downtown Alliance, the business district has weathered the economic downturn in good health. While there are several vacancies, a good foundation of offices, retail and service related business anchor Main and Bond Streets. The US Route 1 corridor is in transition from auto and convenience related uses to office, service and consumer merchandise businesses. A shift in how traffic is treated along this corridor is needed with an emphasis on the MD Route 24 and US Route 1 intersection.

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## **II. SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY BASELINE INFORMATION**

**(2) Describe the Area's land use/zoning make-up (residential, commercial, industrial, and mixed-use). Is the current land use or zoning conducive to revitalization investment? *(Answer Space 4,000 characters)***

The zoning of the designated area was recently revised as part of the 2009 Comprehensive Plan. Form-Based Zoning was introduced to offer more flexibility for potential development and provide for a systematic review of the proposed architectural aesthetic in areas targeted for revitalization. This includes two new designations of B2A along the edges of downtown and B3A along Bond Street and US Route 1 corridor. The new zones incentivize architecturally harmonious projects with limited restrictions to use and density. This zoning is consistent with smart growth visions by concentrating development where community services and infrastructure exist.

The Business districts allow for residential uses to promote mixed use projects and parking sharing is encouraged to keep vehicle restrictions to development at a minimum. Bulk restrictions such as building setbacks are also maintained at the right-of-way to create an architectural edge for a consistent streetscape. This allows maximum building coverage and the ability to maximize development expenditures on architectural treatment. Other zoning of R2, R3 and RO zones adjacent to the business districts are buffered by a Transition Overlay zoning that also serve to regulate development along corridors coming into the Town. An emphasis on Sustainable Development contained in the newly adopted Comprehensive Plan is considered as new regulations and projects are reviewed by the Town.



## **II. SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY BASELINE INFORMATION**

**3) Describe strengths and weaknesses in basic features of community quality-of-life. For instance, is crime an issue for this SC Area? What is the condition and quality of educational choices available to the community? Are artistic, cultural, or community resources, events or facilities within or accessible to residents in the proposed SC Area? (Answer Space 4,000 characters)**

Bel Air is the County Seat and therefore possesses many services not readily available in other parts of Harford County. Several community facilities support the citizens of the Town of Bel Air, including Upper Chesapeake Medical Center, Bel Air Library, Bel Air Volunteer Fire Company, Bel Air Senior Center, Harford County Public Schools, Harford County Historical Society, and those services provided by the presence of the County Administration including; Office on Aging, Children & Youth Services, Harford County Health Department, County Circuit & District Courts and many others. There are several schools located within and in close proximity to the Sustainable Community Area. Bel Air High School, Bel Air Middle School and Homestead/Wakefield Elementary School are located on the same 90 acre campus within walking distance from downtown. John Carroll School at the north end of Town, Bel Air Elementary School and Harford Day School are also within Town limits. These facilities offer youth & adult instruction, cultural experiences, entertainment venues, athletic fields, and parking for downtown events such as the Bel Air Barbecue Bash, First Friday Concerts, and holiday events.

Crime is kept to a minimum due to the efforts of the Bel Air Police Department and the presence of the Harford County Sheriff's Department.

Bel Air was designated as an Arts & Entertainment District by the Maryland State Arts Council in December 2009. This will be built upon the strength of arts venues, education and arts organizations found within the district to create galleries, museums and artists studios. These include the following:

Galleries/Coops          Harford Artists Association  
Chesapeake Gallery

Performance Venues      Bel Air High School  
John Carroll School  
Bel Air Armory  
Rockfield Manor  
Shamrock Park  
Liriodendron Mansion  
William N. McFaul Activities Center

Museums                  Hays House Museum  
Harford Historical Society

Arts Education          Maryland Conservatory of Music  
Maryland School of Ballet  
Exploration Art School  
Harford Piano Learning Center

Arts Organizations      Bel Air Cultural Arts Commission  
Bel Air Recreation Committee  
Bel Air Downtown Alliance  
Harford County Cultural Arts Board  
Center for the Arts

Public Art                The Door sculpture  
Patrick Walker Memorial sculpture  
Daybreak sculpture  
Bobcat sculpture  
TWA Memorial garden

Other                      Harford County Department of Tourism  
Harford Community College

## **II. SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY BASELINE INFORMATION**

### **C. Natural Resources and Environmental Impact: Strengths and Weaknesses**

**(1) Describe the strengths and weaknesses of the community's "natural environment." in or near the Sustainable Community Area. What is the current condition of key natural resources - lands, air, water, watersheds, tree canopy, other? If the community is located in a coastal zone, what risks might the community be subject to associated with climate induced sea level rise? (Answer Space 4,000 characters)**

Bel Air's water system is provided and maintained by Maryland American Water Company. Maryland American draws water from two wells and from the Winter's Run stream system. Winters Run Watershed is not protected by any zoning restriction and is susceptible to drought condition. The MDE issued withdrawal permit states that at minimum flow levels the stream can no longer be used as a drinking water source. A Source Water Protection Study is currently being updated by the Maryland Department of the Environment to determine measures to protect the stream watershed and wellhead recharge areas from contamination. The results of this study will be available by the end of 2012. Bel Air sewer service is provided by the Town through the Department of Public Works. All treatment of the sewerage is provided by the County through a cooperative agreement and user fee structure. An Inflow and Infiltration (I&I) Study of the entire Town sewer system was performed recently by a consultant. The results of this study indicated that a systematic repair and replacement of selected sections of line will be needed over the next several years.

The Town also contracted with a consultant to produce a flood mitigation study within the Town. This study made recommendations to the Town to better protect the residents from flood hazards, prioritize areas of concern and incorporate new techniques for development in and around the floodplain. Several improvements are scheduled to be initiated in 2012 to address potential flooding and deal with water quality in Plumtree Run (one of three major stream channels flowing through the Town). An undersized culvert under George Street near Plumtree Park will be enlarged to accommodate storm water drainage during heavy precipitation. In addition, a currently piped portion of Plumtree Run running through the Park will be daylighted to enhance water quality. The Town is also in the process of re-mapping the floodplain associated with Plumtree Run to increase the accuracy of the flood limits in areas of greatest material and human impact. This study will be finalized once the work at George Street and Plumtree Park are completed and incorporated into the revised DFIRM maps now in progress.

The Town is a 'Tree City USA' participant and recently completed a tree inventory of all street trees throughout the Town. This inventory will be used by an arborist on staff who works with a Tree Committee to address program requirements and create initiatives with regard to the tree canopy in the Town. The Town is also a PLANT (People Loving and Nurturing Trees) participant which encourages private stewardship and cultivation of trees in the Town.

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## **II. SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY BASELINE INFORMATION**

**(2) Describe the strengths and weaknesses of any current efforts to reduce the community's "carbon footprint" or impact on the environment. Is recycling (commercial or residential) available to minimize waste? Are there current efforts to encourage the purchase and availability of fresh local food and other local products and services to the community? Describe any current energy or water conservation efforts that may be underway. If the community has not implemented one of the above initiatives, has the community identified a need or interest to pursue these or other efforts to reduce environmental impact, for instance through the new Sustainable Maryland Certified initiative? (Answer Space 4,000 characters)**

The concept of a reducing the carbon footprint in the Town is addressed in the recent Comprehensive Plan update in 2009. The Town requires improvement in energy and water conservation with walkability, passive solar design, complete streets, storm water management, alternative transportation, and other initiatives concerning both community programs and municipal facilities.

The Town currently provides for single stream recycling from curbside along with bulk trash pick-up, leaf pick-up and street sweeping services at designated times during the year.

The Town of Bel Air also runs two farmers markets during the warm weather months. The larger market is downtown on Saturday mornings and a smaller market will be moved next year to Main Street on Tuesday mornings. There are plans to expand to a year-around market that would be attached to the Milton Reckord Armory (now the Town of Bel Air Visitor Center & Community Center). This facility would be a business incubator and also provide exhibits aimed at increasing the awareness and education of Bel Air businesses and residents on the benefits of sustainable technology. The design incorporates sustainable design techniques such as permeable paving, bio-retention, native planting, and living walls.

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## **II. SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY BASELINE INFORMATION**

**(3) Describe the strengths and weaknesses of the jurisdiction's current stormwater management practices and how these may affect the proposed SC Area. Is redevelopment and retrofitting of infrastructure an issue or opportunity in this SC Area? Stormwater runoff is a significant source of pollution to Maryland's streams and the Chesapeake Bay. Buildings constructed before 1985 have little or no stormwater controls, and development between 1985 and 2010 have some controls. Updated stormwater regulations passed by Maryland's General Assembly in 2010 require that development and redevelopment projects utilize stringent stormwater controls. Sustainable Community Areas may have opportunities for redevelopment practices that can reduce stormwater flows. (Answer Space 4,000 characters)**

The Town of Bel Air works with Harford County reviewing all storm water management plans, permits, facilities and maintenance agreements. The Town enforces the revised SWM regulations adopted in May of 2010. As provided for in the Watershed Implementation Plan, the Town is coordinating with the County on their Plumtree Run Watershed Restoration as related to portions of the stream within Bel Air. This effort incorporates in-stream storm water management to address deterioration due to uncontrolled runoff. The first portions of Plumtree Run should be addressed in 2013.

## **II. SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY BASELINE INFORMATION**

### **D. Economic Conditions & Access to Opportunity: Strengths and Weaknesses**

**(1) Describe the jurisdiction's current economic strengths and weaknesses. For example, are there distinct economic drivers in the area or region that will affect access to job opportunities and the progress of the SC Plan? What are the main barriers to the Area's economic competitiveness? What is the current level of broadband access available to serve residents, businesses and public facilities? What efforts are currently in place to increase worker skills and employment? Describe trends in employment rates and business formation.**

*(Answer Space 4,000 characters)*

The Town of Bel Air has several economic strengths, along with a few weaknesses. The economic drivers for the Town of Bel Air are the County offices and Court facilities, the Upper Chesapeake Medical Center and the downtown retail and service providers. Over the past decade, the Town has experienced growth in population, services and community development. Since the downtown core is a government, office and financial hub, the market is naturally geared towards the working population and includes destination services such as the Circuit and District Courts, lawyers, offices, banks, accountants, restaurants and some specialty retail. Coupled with this growth are a few challenges: The majority of the buildings in the downtown have little or no parking and are constructed close to the street. There is also a lack of housing in downtown, an absence of overnight accommodations (a hotel or bed & breakfast facility), movie theatres, fine dining, a used bookstore, an ice-cream store and several other types of services have been identified through public input as desired in the community. However, the majority of commercial construction during the past five years has been retail development, primarily located along the Route 1 and Route 24 corridors. Several notable exceptions are the Upper Chesapeake Health Systems campus on Route 24, the Thomas Hays Building and Spenceola building in the downtown area, both of which are Class A office space.

Bel Air has little industry. This, in fact, is the main barrier to the area's economic competitiveness. Neither zoning nor available vacant land supports this use in most sections of Town. The majority of industrially zoned parcels in this area are occupied, but the only industrial parcels still operating as true industrial uses are located in the northern portion of the Town along the old railroad line. The nearby municipalities of Aberdeen and Havre de Grace are better positioned with available zoning and undeveloped parcels to solicit and attract large-scale manufacturers that would provide job opportunities to the local community. Bel Air is in the process of installing FIOS through several areas of town, and broadband access is available throughout the municipal boundaries. Over the last five years, unemployment rates have generally been below the state and national average, due in part to the BRAC initiative that took place from 2006 to 2011, which transferred over 2,000 jobs into the County. Bel Air unemployment has averaged from 5 to 7.5% in that period.

## **II. SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY BASELINE INFORMATION**

**(2) Describe the jurisdiction's housing market and access to affordable workforce housing. What are the trends in residential construction (rental and homeownership), homeownership rate, foreclosure rate and, property values. Describe how and whether your jurisdiction's prevailing housing costs - both homeownership and rental - are affordable to households below 120% AMI, 80% AMI and 50% AMI. What efforts are in place currently to house individuals, families and the disabled at or below the AMI levels described above? (Answer Space 4,000 characters)**

The current trends in the local housing market are the demand for more affordable housing, the soft condominium market and the need for mixed-use development. The demographic for housing demand in the 35-55 age category is underserved. Over the last couple of years, foreclosure rates have been straddling at 2.8 %, below the county average of 3.6%. Nonetheless, the recent national economic downturn is affecting Bel Air in many ways. Housing prices have declined, the vacancy rate has risen somewhat, and construction trades are experiencing a significant slowdown. Coupled with the fact that Bel Air has little vacant space to build new housing, there is particular concern for the limited supply of affordable housing. Several programs are currently in place to address this issue, including the Workforce Housing initiative, the State's Live Near Your Work program, and the Town Employee Resident Bonus program. In the past, the majority of developments in Town have included single-family and, to a lesser extent, townhouse units. With the limited land area available, economic concerns and changing area demographics, this development pattern of producing single family and worker housing is changing. Senior housing has been the primary focus in recent years. With the baby-boom generation reaching retirement, the demand for senior housing options has increased. Over the past seven years, the Town has added 192 new elderly housing units, and 210 more units were constructed in 2010. Along with this, the 2011 BRAC initiative created additional housing demand in and around the Greater Bel Air area. This demand ranged from condo/apartment type units to large single-family units. Most of the Town's housing stock was built between 1900 and 1987. This aging housing stock is generally well maintained, but in some instances there is pressure to demolish or expand uses. This creates conflicts in neighborhoods concerned about compatibility and retaining the Town's character. The prevailing housing costs, both in homeownership and rental, are affordable to households below 50% of AMI, but not to 80% or 120%. There are very few apartment complexes in Bel Air. Condominiums range from \$220K to \$300K and the average older single family home sales price in early 2012 was \$252,352.

## **II. SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY BASELINE INFORMATION**

**(3) Describe the SC Area's demographic trends (with respect to age, race, household size, household income, educational attainment, or other relevant factors). (Answer Space 4,000 characters)**

Bel Air continues to mirror many other small to medium municipalities that have built out most of their available inventory of land. Fortunately, Bel Air has a strong skilled local work force that enables 20.4% of the town to maintain a median household income of \$60,178. The population with a college education or a professional degree is estimated to be at least 13%.

Total Population 10,120

### Educational Attainment by population %

High school or below	9%
High school graduate	47%
Bachelors or associates degree	31%
Graduate degree	13%

### Housing Status (in housing units unless noted)

The average household size is 2.21.

Total	4,744	
Occupied	4,491	
Owner-occupied	2,823	
Population in owner-occupied (number of individuals)	6,447	
Renter-occupied	1,668	
Population in renter-occupied (number of individuals)	3,451	
Vacant	253	
Vacant: for rent	98	
Vacant: for sale	50	
Vacant: for seasonal/recreational/occasional use	19	

### Population by Sex/Age

Male	4,840
Female	5,280
Under 18	2,079
18 & over	8,041
20-24	677
25-34	1,456
35-49	1,918
50-64	1,912
65 & over	1,859

### Population by Ethnicity

Hispanic or Latino	439
Non Hispanic or Latino	9,681

### Population by Race

White	9,083	
African American	448	
Asian	182	
American Indian and Alaska Native	23	
Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander	8	
Other	176	
Identified by two or more	200	

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### **III. LOCAL CAPACITY TO IMPLEMENT PLANS & PROJECTS**

#### **A. Organizational Structure:**

**Describe the Applicant's organizational structure. Specifically, which organizations are members in the Sustainable Communities Workgroup and who are the respective staff? Who are the leaders, and how will the Workgroup advisor or staff manage implementation of the SC Area Plan? (Answer Space 4,000 characters)**

The organizational structure of the Sustainable Communities Workgroup is layered between a core group of very involved contributors and a larger group of community stakeholders. This paradigm is designed to streamline the decision making process and allow for consistency of policy over time. The core group includes the following members:

1. Kevin Small            Bel Air Dept of Planning
2. Trish Heidenreich    Bel Air Dept of Economic Development
3. Randy Robertson     Bel Air Dept of Public Works
4. Chris Schlehr         Bel Air Town Administrator
5. Paul Thompson        Bel Air Economic Development Commission
6. Debbie Haney         Bel Air Economic Development Commission
7. Scott Walker          Bel Air Downtown Alliance



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### **III. LOCAL CAPACITY TO IMPLEMENT PLANS & PROJECTS**

#### **B.Organizational Experience:**

**Describe the Applicant organization's past experience in administering revitalization plans and projects. Describe the roles of the members of the Sustainable Communities Workgroup, including their experience in implementing revitalization initiatives. What are the strengths and challenges of the capacity of these groups with respect to implementation of the SC Plan? (Answer Space 4,000 characters)**

Director of Planning Kevin Small has 25 years of experience in the private sector managing projects associated with community development, regional master plans, land use planning and natural resource inventory and analysis.

Director of Economic Development Trish Heidenreich has 25 years' experience in the private sector managing business development and 6 years' experience in public administration managing real estate development and rehabilitation projects, site location, and public/private partnership management.

Director of Public Works Randy Robertson has 14 years of experience in planning and managing municipal water, sewer and storm water systems; watershed protection and community environmental stewardship.

Town Administrator Christopher Schlehr served in the U. S. Navy and retired in 1992 as a Commander, Civil Engineer Corps, with 20 years of service. Chris started working for the Town of Bel Air in 1992 as Director of Public Works. He accepted the position of Town Administrator in February 2000.

Paul Thompson is principal of Architectural Design Works (ADW), a well-known full service planning and architectural firm with locations in Towson and Bel Air. Paul is also Vice-Chair of the Economic and Community Development Commission (ECDC) and has sat on the board for 19 years, where he's been a driving force in Bel Air's successful downtown revitalization.

Debbie Haney is Chair of the ECDC and has over 15 years' experience in the commercial real estate business.

Scott Walker is Executive Director of the Bel Air Downtown Alliance and has over 20 years' private sector management experience in the hotel and restaurant industry.

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### **III. LOCAL CAPACITY TO IMPLEMENT PLANS & PROJECTS**

#### **C. Public Input:**

**How did residents and other stakeholders in the community provide input to Action Plan described below in Section IV?** *(Answer Space 4,000 characters)*

The core workgroup is comprised of local business owners, residents, business associations and government officials that are key stakeholders and facilitators in the Town. The Core group crafted the Sustainable Community Action Plan based upon their aggregate experience in the Town, the Bel Air Comprehensive Plan, and the twelve visions of the State Economic Growth, Resource Protection, and Planning Policy.

The Town conducted a kick-off meeting with the core workgroup on December 12 to assemble information, connect experiences and ascertain opinions about existing conditions. From this meeting the Town collected targeted data regarding economic trends, housing preferences, environmental conditions and infrastructure needs. Once this task was complete, the core group reconvened to review the gathered information and formulate strategies based upon the Sustainable Community Action Plan outline. These strategies were presented in a public meeting on March 12, 2012 where the community was invited along with the expanded workgroup to review the approach and provide feedback. The core group provided a final review and to propose any additional changes or additions to the Action Plan. The expanded group is expected to meet every year to review the progress of the plan and to make recommendations.

#### **IV. SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY ACTION PLAN**

The Sustainable Community Action Plan (SC Plan or Plan) is meant to be a multi-year investment strategy - a strategic set of revitalization initiatives and projects that local partners believe will increase the economic vitality and livability of their community, increased prosperity for local households and improved health of the surrounding environment. The Plan should be flexible enough to be updated regularly and renewed every five years as the community envisions new goals. The priority initiatives and projects in the SC Plan should improve the livability of community places -- residential, commercial, or other public or private properties - and create new work, retail, recreational and housing opportunities for residents. These projects should also reduce the environmental impact of the community through water and energy resource conservation and management strategies. In this way, the Plan can be a road map for local stakeholders as well as State agencies to work together to create a more a sustainable and livable community.

##### **A. Supporting existing communities & reducing environmental impacts.**

**(1) A community's approach to Smart Growth generally includes two inter-related areas of focus: encouraging reinvestment and growth in existing communities; and, discouraging growth that degrades natural resources, and farms and rural landscapes. Broadly describe your jurisdiction's Smart Growth approach and any significant accomplishments made over the last decade or so. (Answer Space 4,000 characters)**

The proposed Bel Air Sustainable Community Area supports the Town's smart growth objectives as outlined in the 2009 Comprehensive Plan by encouraging investment opportunities and focusing development into appropriate areas. The Town's smart growth approach is deeply embedded in the twelve Planning Visions outlined by the State in 2009.

Vision 1 – Quality of Life and Sustainability  
 Vision 2 – Public Participation  
 Vision 3 – Growth Areas  
 Vision 4 – Community Design  
 Vision 5 – Infrastructure  
 Vision 6 – Transportation  
 Vision 7 – Housing  
 Vision 8 – Economic Development  
 Vision 9 – Environmental Protection  
 Vision 10 – Resource Conservation  
 Vision 11 – Stewardship  
 Vision 12 – Implementation

All future development review will be in accordance with the adopted smart growth principles. Density and use restrictions will be consistent with the State's Priority Funding Areas in a manner that makes efficient use of land and infrastructure. To date, the Town has utilized smart growth visions to achieve several goals for economic revitalization. In 2000, The Town created the Bel Air Downtown Alliance with funds provided through Designated Neighborhoods. The Alliance has become a foundation to build upon through façade improvement, low interest loans and tax incentives.

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#### **IV. SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY ACTION PLAN**

**(2) Describe any major investments in community infrastructure -water, stormwater, sewer, sidewalk, lighting, etc. -- that must be undertaken in order to improve the readiness or competitiveness of the proposed SC Area for private investment and compliance (if applicable) with TMDL regulations. Addressing the stormwater during redevelopment can reduce the pollution entering our streams and contribution to the restoration of the Chesapeake Bay. Investments in infrastructure, generally, can be an important catalyst for new private investment in the community. (Answer Space 4,000 characters)**

Over the past several years, the Town has invested in its commercial core by assisting SHA with the revitalization of Main Street. Several upgrades to Bond Street will be implemented in 2012 to continue the commitment to Bel Air's downtown. Extension of decorative lighting fixtures up and down Route 22 and Route 1 is desired to further reinforce the theme established in the Main Street area. In addition, a comprehensive directional signage plan is needed to help with awareness and convenience for the many services in Bel Air. The Town has several initiatives slated for the next few years to improve the public infrastructure and provide better community facilities.

- Expand and enhance a cooperative and comprehensive source water protection program with State of Maryland, Harford County and Maryland American Water Company to assure long term water shed protection. At a minimum, this should include cooperative planning, water monitoring/sampling, public outreach and awareness, land acquisition and easements, contamination source inventory and well inspections.
- Continue a data gathering program to determine areas most affected by inflow and infiltration.
- Incentivize Green Development as it relates to energy and water conservation.
- Continue to map the Town's stormwater management system and its outfalls; monitor illicit discharges and improve public knowledge about stormwater management.
- Reconstruct and improve stream bank erosion in compromised storm drain outfall locations.
- Take a comprehensive and regional approach to storm water management.
- Explore recycling opportunities of special products such as concrete, asphalt, etc.

#### **IV. SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY ACTION PLAN**

**(3) Describe policies, initiatives or projects that the community will undertake or expand in order to reduce the SC Area's impact on the environment. Examples include but are not limited to: conservation or management of stormwater through retrofitting of streets and by-ways (Green Streets, rain gardens, etc.); retrofitting of facilities and homes for energy conservation; implementation of "green" building codes and mixed-use zoning; recycling of waste; clean-ups of watersheds; and, encouragement of "Buy Local" approaches that benefit local suppliers and food producers. A comprehensive menu of such actions may be found through the nonprofit Sustainable Maryland Certified initiative. (Answer Space 4,000 characters)**

Objectives adopted by the Town Commissioners as part of the revisions to the zoning code are being used to focus growth and protect sensitive areas.

- Continue to identify stormwater management outfall areas that require upgrading and investigate the possibility of day-lighting piped streambeds.
- Identify a network of streams, wetlands and other natural areas that connect and protect sensitive areas and other environmental features.
- Protect 100-year floodplain through deed restrictions to assure safety of the community and integrity of the environment.
- Encourage street tree plantings and the creation of a regional greenway system to protect streams and associated floodplains and to maximize environmental benefits.
- Identify areas suitable for wetland mitigation.
- Employ flexible development regulations, innovative site design, Best Management Practices, and mitigation measures in order to protect the natural environment and sensitive areas.
- Investigate the possibility of obtaining easements or purchasing sensitive areas for protection in conjunction with other locally adopted environmental and growth management programs.
- Limit the use of environmentally sensitive areas to visual or recreational open space, greenways, or undisturbed open area.
- Protect sensitive habitats and other unique areas following both State and Federal species lists and protection guidelines. Impacts to potentially viable habitats of listed threatened and endangered species or natural systems that are otherwise unique should be avoided altogether. Development Regulation measures should be reviewed and updated to assure adequate protection of identified sensitive areas and habitats.
- Where possible, restore stream buffers with native riparian vegetation.

**IV. SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY ACTION PLAN**

**(4) Which community groups or stakeholders will be key to the implementation of the initiatives and projects noted in this section?** *(Answer Space 4,000 characters)*

The Town will work with the Bel Air Appearance and Beautification Committee, the Bel Air Tree Committee, Harford County Planning and Zoning, Maryland American Water Company, US Green Building Council, Harford County Public Works, Harford County Public Schools and Harford County Office of Sustainability.

## **IV. SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY ACTION PLAN**

### **B. Valuing communities and neighborhoods -- building upon assets and building in amenities:**

**(1) What are the key assets that exist in the community upon which the Plan's projects and initiatives will build? Assets may include physical assets such as parks and historic structures and also civic and economic assets such as employers, educational institutions, and cultural organizations and activities. (Answer Space 4,000 characters)**

The Town of Bel Air has many assets with which to capitalize community sustainability goals. Some of the more developed features are the Upper Chesapeake Medical Center, the County seat facilities and downtown Bel Air. Upper Chesapeake is currently constructing a 59,000 square foot Cancer Center within its medical campus that includes several doctors' office buildings, an ambulatory care center and a 120 bed hospital. The Bel Air Reckord Armory has been upgraded and serves as a Community Center along with the new urban pocket park next door. The underused garages adjacent to the structure are planned for renovation as part of a business incubator and sustainable advocacy program.

A strong working relationship with the County continues to help accommodate office space in the downtown area and ensure the County's continued presence in Bel Air. The main emphasis will be on the revitalization of the residential areas around the downtown, especially Howard Park. The reversal of absentee landlords through a rental registry and the establishment of stable homeownership in this area are key to maintaining the quality of life that has attracted many home buyers over the past several decades. The Town hopes to encourage the revitalization of this neighborhood by promoting walkable streets, encouraging mass transit service, rehabilitating local parks, controlling commercial home occupations and relaxing restrictions to home improvement and additions.

- Walking tours and educational, historical and cultural brochures to increase awareness.
- Support traffic control and parking control legislation that will maximize safe access to all school facilities.
- Improve pedestrian and bicycle access to schools in accordance with the State's Safe Routes to School program.
- Act as a conduit for information to increase awareness of educational and cultural opportunities available to area citizens through the Town website and publications.
- Maintain State Arts & Entertainment district designation to provide support and assistance for a cultural arts facility, the local visual and performing arts community and the increased presence of museums, galleries, art and music venues.
- Work with County Board of Education on local education initiatives and to assure coordination of programs and activities.
- Work with the local medical community to assure quality, accessible health services to meet citizens' needs throughout their life cycle.
- Support the medical/science magnet program at Bel Air High School and the nursing program at Harford Tech and Harford Community College to assure development of future health care professionals.
- Ensure access to medical facilities from Bel Air and regionally.
- Encourage development of neighborhood day care facilities in each quadrant of Bel Air.
- Support development of additional programs for elementary and middle school age children supported by senior citizens.
- Add a transit stop at the library to improve citizens access to the facility.
- Coordinate with the library to provide area citizens with venues for meetings, cultural arts events, exhibits, concerts, etc.

#### **IV. SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY ACTION PLAN**

**(2) What policies, initiatives or projects will reuse or enhance the historical assets, traditional business districts/Main Streets and cultural resources of the community? What actions will reinforce your community's authentic "sense of place" and historic character? (Answer Space 4,000 characters)**

The Town already has a major investment in its historic downtown businesses and residences. This asset can be enhanced by several new initiatives that are part of the goals and objectives of the Town's Comprehensive Plan.

- Propose/facilitate design and development strategies as an incentive for owners of historic properties.
- Promote the Town's Historic Tax Credit Program as a tool for economic development, as well as historic preservation.
- Emphasize the importance of historic preservation in obtaining LEED certification and meeting State sustainability goals.
- Identify infill development opportunities and develop procedures to minimize its impact on surrounding historic properties by identifying those historic structures within the boundaries of future form-based zoning districts that set the "pattern" for mass, scale, design, etc.
- Educate owners of historic property on healthy, energy efficient renovation techniques for historic properties.
- Develop educational initiatives focusing on Bel Air's cultural history and the importance of the Town's history and historic preservation efforts. These may include tours, presentations, exhibits, etc.
- Minimize the impact of any proposed zoning regulation modifications on identified historic structures.
- Evaluate the possibility of increasing the Town's tax credit allowance to encourage preservation of historic structures.

The Town also has a solid, certified Main Street program, operating via the Bel Air Downtown Alliance, which implements strategies through its 5-point approach as follows:

- **Design Committee:** Partners with the Town of Bel Air's Appearance & Beautification Committee to ensure that the historic beauty and charm of Downtown Bel Air is preserved while also promoting new projects that enhance the design landscape, such as, the Hearts of Harford Public Art Project, building murals, etc.
- **Economic Restructuring Committee:** In partnership with the Town of Bel Air's ECDC (Economic and Community Development Commission), this committee works towards maintaining and promoting the economic health and well-being of Downtown Bel Air by supporting current business owners and attracting new business owners.
- **Promotions Committee:** This committee helps to promote the annual events hosted by the Bel Air Downtown Alliance (Chocolate & Candy Festival, First Fridays, Girls Night Out, Outdoor Movie, MD State BBQ Bash, Girls Night Out, Downtown Music Fest, etc.), as well as, promoting Downtown Bel Air as a vibrant community destination for visitors and business owners.
- **Organization Committee:** As a "member based" organization, this committee serves as liaison between the organization and the membership in an effort to address their wants, needs, and desires. In addition, it is used to recruit new members and promote community membership with our Friends 7 Family Membership Program.
- **Sustainability/Green Committee:** In an effort to educate local business owners and community members, this committee works closely with the Town of Bel Air's Planning Department to share the projects, programs, and education tools available for creating a "greener" and more sustainable workplace.



#### **IV. SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY ACTION PLAN**

**(3) Describe policies, initiatives or projects that will increase community access to green spaces, parks and other amenities? A community can gain social and physical benefits from access to a healthy natural environment. The inclusion of complete streets, trails, green space, parks and trees contribute to the character and health of a community. Examples might include improvements to the tree canopy by planting street trees, improving local neighborhood streams, or reusing a vacant lot for a new community park or playground.***(Answer Space 4,000 characters)*

The Town is rich with well developed parks that offer alternatives to the active and athletic focused recreation facilities in the County. However, some of these parks are showing their age and are in need of an update and regeneration.

- Maximize green space through development of pocket parks, public gardens, landscaping/tree plantings, courtyard seating areas.
- Provide recreation activities for all age groups.
- Provide connections between parks and neighborhoods through enhanced trail network.
- Encourage completion of Ma & Pa Trail through Bel Air.
- Upgrade and expand existing park facilities to meet current safety standards and citizens recreational needs.
- Publicize activities and events more effectively.
- Foster a cohesive and fluid working relationship with the County and Bel Air Recreational Committee in planning and design of facilities and programs.
- Encourage expansion of open space acquisition through land dedication, purchase and collaboration with private and/or non-governmental entities such as land trusts.
- Create a link to Cedar Lane Recreation complex through print and social media.

**IV. SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY ACTION PLAN**

**(4) Which community groups or stakeholders will be key to the implementation of the initiatives and projects noted in this section?** *(Answer Space 4,000 characters)*

The Town and the workgroup will work with existing committees and groups to provide a comprehensive approach to establishment of priorities and program details. These groups include the Bel Air Historic Preservation Commission, Bel Air Recreation Council, Bel Air Cultural Arts Commission, Harford County Public Schools, Upper Chesapeake Health System, Harford County Community Services, Harford County Parks and Recreation, Bel Air Arts & Entertainment Committee, Harford County Office of Sustainability and Greater Bel Air Community Foundation.

## **IV. SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY ACTION PLAN**

### **C. Enhancing economic competitiveness**

**(1) What economic development policies, initiatives or projects will improve the economy through investments in small businesses and other key employment sectors? What economic development and business incentives will you build upon or implement as part of the SC Plan? Examples could include but are not limited to: green-taping for expedited project application review; permitting and inspection; job training; business tax credits; and, revolving loan funds. (Answer Space 4,000 characters)**

The Town will enhance their existing policies and projects to encourage reinvestment and revitalization of commercial activity and attract residential development through development of small businesses and creating a diversity of commercial uses.

- Encourage development of entertainment facilities such as a cultural arts center, movie theatre, and similar uses.
- Encourage development of a hotel/conference center and/or bed and breakfast facilities to meet the lodging needs of the community.
- Encourage development of a more diverse mix of restaurants, entertainment and retail opportunities in the Town Center to meet the needs of residents, the local work force and visitors.
- Develop a critical mass of specialty retail shops, such as antique shops, craft stores, ethnic and specialty restaurants and grocery stores.
- Develop a business incubator program.
- Convert the garages at the Armory into boutique shops and/or incubator spaces.
- Address parking concerns by developing a second parking garage in the Town Center, disseminating information about parking availability and developing other parking facilities as needed.
- Provide a Revolving Loan Fund to assist existing and emerging businesses with infrastructure capital.
- Create a comprehensive wayfinding system to create awareness of facilities.
- Continue to host events that provide entertainment opportunities for residents throughout the year, including, but not limited to, an expanded lunchtime concert series, a film series, concerts, dance and theatre productions at the proposed community arts center. Develop and identify new events that could be accommodated at the Center for the Arts.
- Identify one or two events that will draw regional crowds and recruit volunteers for development in conjunction with the Cultural Arts Commission, the ECDC, and the Bel Air Downtown Alliance.
- Expand the Bel Air Film Festival to draw visitors to downtown during the "off –season" such as February, March, April or October.
- Consider obtaining easements from property owners at the Town entry points to erect distinctive gateway markings.
- Evaluate development of a Town Trolley system.

#### **IV. SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY ACTION PLAN**

**(2) What workforce development policies, initiatives or projects will increase access to jobs and economic opportunity for residents in the SC Area? Do you have a goal for job creation? Are green jobs an opportunity in the jurisdiction or SC Area? (Answer Space 4,000 characters)**

The Town will establish initiatives and incentives that will build upon the sustainable community area visions through an organizational structure that promotes development and assists with financial needs.

- Organize a business assistance team to help new businesses through the development process.
- Investigate property tax abatement program to encourage renovation.
- Encourage development of small offices or retail spaces fronting on Bond Street, in the “rear” of Main Street buildings.
- Target and recruit specific businesses that will enhance the Town center by providing statistical information and marketing packages.
- Support and encourage the efforts of the Bel Air Downtown Alliance.
- Identify an economic development resource team, such as the ECDC, to meet regularly with local business people, both individually and in a round table forum.
- Capitalize on the Community Reinvestment Act (CRA) by contacting local banks requesting an opportunity to submit project requests at their annual CRA meetings.
- Capitalize on the Town’s website as an economic development tool by refurbishing the website, adding photos, a list of events, a copy of the Town’s Development Regulations and links to local businesses, etc.
- Increase the visibility of the Visitors Center via advertising or marketing tools and promote it as a social center and an accessible place for tourists/visitors to obtain information about Bel Air and its services.
- Increase historic tourism opportunities via the County’s Tourism office and promote the Visitors Center at the Armory. The Town works closely with the Harford County Tourism Office to increase historic tourism opportunities by bundling Town tourism efforts with the regional marketing efforts of the County’s. The Town’s Economic Development Director sits on the County’s Tourism Advisory Board and ensures that Bel Air’s tourism initiatives are aligned with the County’s and the State’s “Choose Maryland” program. We also plan to expand local historic tourism independently by increasing our advertising both locally and regionally when there are events, such as the Film Festival, the Festival for the Arts or the Historical Society’s annual historic Open House Tour. Press releases and marketing through social media can bring attention to the variety of events we offer, and we can publish the offerings on our Town and Arts and Entertainment websites. We will continue to use the Visitors Center as a way to get print materials and information to residents and visitors.

There are several well-known historical assets the Town capitalizes on to attract visitors from outside the local area: Hays House Museum, Historical Society of Harford County, Bel Air Courthouse, Rockfield Manor, Liriodendron Mansion and the Bel Air Reckord Armory.

#### **IV. SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY ACTION PLAN**

**(3) Describe whether the Sustainable Community will be impacted by the Base Re-alignment and Closure (BRAC) activities in Maryland. If impacted, how do the initiatives and projects in your Plan complement BRAC-related growth? (If not applicable, all ten points will be assessed based on answers to questions 1, 2, and 4) (Answer Space 4,000 characters)**

Bel Air was directly impacted by the BRAC initiative that was completed on September 15, 2011. The impact to the Town was an increase in population, not in the municipal limits per se, but in the Greater Bel Air area, which in turn, brought increased demand for goods and services centered in the Town's three commercial districts: Route 1 and 24, historic downtown Main Street area, and the Route 24 corridor. Town of Bel Air municipal limits has a population estimate of 10,680, based on 2010 census data, and given a standard deviation of 5%, our municipal population during certain times of the year can hover in the 11,000 range. However, the outlying area that surrounds the town experienced a high influx of growth due to BRAC relocation activity. It is estimated, through the Harford County Office of Economic Development ("OED") and the Fort Monmouth Relocation Office that over 60% of individuals who moved to Maryland as a result of the BRAC Fort Monmouth – Aberdeen (APG) transaction were locating near or within the Greater Bel Air area. The population within this area is now approximately 120,000, which equates to almost 49% of the County's population. The Town has taken advantage of this 3,000-plus population growth by working in partnership with OED to create mutually beneficial programs and incentives for the people who have relocated here. One of the programs offered is "The Entrepreneur's Edge," which is a system of tools for setting up a business in the area.

In addition, one of the initiatives that the Town took in anticipation of BRAC was to become designated, in December of 2010, as Maryland's 19th Arts & Entertainment District. The tax benefits and incentives by becoming a district were seen as a draw, not only for the existing population, but also for those BRAC employees coming from New Jersey. Why?...because many comments received from these individuals during the BRAC process was that Harford County, Cecil County and its municipalities didn't offer the kinds of cultural activities and environment present in New York City – which, to Fort Monmouth employees, was a simple one hour train trip into the City. Therefore, setting up the A&E District enabled us to promote the Bel Air area as a trendy, cultural and artistic milieu that could ultimately compete in the artistic marketplace.

Currently the Town is working on a project called "Armory Marketplace" which is a rehab project designed to convert 1950's-era garages located at the back of the Reckord Armory into incubator spaces for seed and emerging businesses. The Town hopes to attract BRAC-related minority-based entrepreneurs, to consider incubating their ideas in this facility. Town staff stays in contact with the Susquehanna Workforce Network, who holds a database of BRAC related job seekers and those interested in starting their own business.

For the last seven years, Bel Air has been an active member of the "CSSC" – the Chesapeake Science and Security Corridor – and Town staff has attended most CSSC meetings since 2006. At first, the CSSC was designed to help us prepare for BRAC; now it serves to help us stay current with post-BRAC activities, such as development of the University Research Park and the Aberdeen train station. Although these projects are not located in Bel Air, they will no doubt be a benefit for our future economic development projects, as urban growth spreads and travel connectivity between municipalities shortens. Ironically, Bel Air never received designation as a BRAC zone, much to the disappointment of the Town's officials. This made Bel Air unable to obtain State and Federal BRAC funding for infrastructure improvements. However, through its strong co-partnerships with the organizations mentioned above, as well as others, the Town continues to look for ways to improve its physical and community development assets, so it may continue serving the BRAC population.

**IV. SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY ACTION PLAN**

**(4) Which community groups or stakeholders will be key to the implementation of the initiatives and projects noted in this section? (Answer Space 4,000 characters)**

The Town will work with the Economic and Community Development Commission, the Harford County Tourism Board and the Bel Air Downtown Alliance, Harford County Economic Development, Harford County Chamber of Commerce, Greater Bel Air Community Foundation and Harford County Office of Sustainability.

#### **IV. SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY ACTION PLAN**

##### **D. Promoting access to quality affordable housing.**

**(1) What housing policies, initiatives or projects will expand housing choices - rental and homeownership -- for people of a range of ages, incomes, and also for disabled individuals? How will these actions address the current housing conditions and needs noted in Section II? (Answer Space 4,000 characters)**

New residential housing opportunities are constrained in the proposed area due to limited undeveloped land so the focus will be upon redevelopment of existing properties. Mixed Use development will be heavily relied upon for many areas dominated by commercial. Mixed residential with commercial provides for an active downtown during weekends and evenings and promotes a more diverse housing stock that will be less susceptible to economic pressures. The Town will establish policies and programs to address the access to quality housing for all ages, incomes and abilities.

- A clearer avenue of communication with group homes will be pursued with these facilities to better address the unique challenges they face.
- Encourage infill and redevelopment in existing neighborhoods and mixed use residential opportunities in appropriate commercial districts by reduction of parking requirements and building setbacks to maximize the buildable footprint and square foot yield.
- Evaluate housing needs and potential development sites and coordinate with potential home builders who specialize in affordable housing.
- Modify development regulations, as needed, to streamline and expedite the review process, promote infill and mixed use development where appropriate, and incorporate a professional architectural review process.
- Develop an inventory of potential adaptive reuse properties that require rehabilitation by connecting County programs to potential property owners in need of financing.
- Publicize and promote State, federal and local housing assistance programs.
- Encourage infill and redevelopment in existing neighborhoods and mixed use residential opportunities in appropriate commercial districts.
- Re-designate areas of the town for high-density residential and mixed-use development during the next Comprehensive Plan update.

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#### **IV. SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY ACTION PLAN**

**(2) Will these housing initiatives or projects increase access to transit or community walkability and/or decrease transportation costs? In other words, will the housing investments result in more people living near work or town centers, or able to more conveniently reach work, school, shopping and/or recreation?** *(Answer Space 4,000 characters)*

The Town is committed to bringing together housing, employment, shopping, education and recreation through initiatives based on insuring that access is provided to all citizens of the Town. The goal is to provide for all residents to live conveniently near most every day destinations.

- Coordinate with Harford County Transit to provide stable, responsive, informed and accessible transit services within the Town by reviewing transit stop locations, schedules and public awareness of services.
- The Town will create a comprehensive Pedestrian/Bicycle connections plan to create priorities for improvements, standards for design, and consistency of development for public linkages between residential, commercial, recreation and employment areas.
- Focus on the “sustainability” of new development with an emphasis on reducing the “carbon footprint” for existing and new development.
- Assure safe, adequate and convenient access for pedestrians and bicyclists throughout area neighborhoods.
- Establish a formal relationship between the Office on Aging and the Town.
- Encourage promotion of the McFaul Center as a community center to be utilized by all sectors of the population.
- Support programs to encourage increased ridership on Town-Go-Round by 2020.
- Support a pedestrian safety program for seniors.



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#### **IV. SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY ACTION PLAN**

**(3) What is your goal for of number of units to be created of affordable workforce housing, rental and homeownership? What populations (by income or special needs) will benefit from this increased access to affordable housing? (Answer Space 4,000 characters)**

There are limited opportunities for affordable housing in Bel Air. Many of these prospective assistance programs are not readily available to potential residents or red tape becomes too much of a hurdle to those who would benefit most. The Town is dedicated to providing for a diversity of housing types to accommodate all income ranges and socio-economic needs.

- Coordinate with Habitat for Humanity on providing a home to a deserving family within the Town limits and creating an on-going relationship with Habitat and other similar organizations to continue on a proactive basis to provide for affordable housing.
- Evaluate property maintenance regulations to assure stringent enforcement of housing quality.
- Develop incentives for retaining historic facades and structures and revitalizing older units and neighborhoods.
- Develop procedures for evaluating the Town's purchase of threatened and deteriorating structures for resale and rehabilitation.
- Collaborate with public and private sector providers to develop affordable workforce housing and to encourage "sweat equity" programs, thereby allowing homeowners to participate in construction of housing or improvements.
- Emphasize the use of landscaping and open space to improve neighborhoods aesthetically and functionally.

**IV. SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY ACTION PLAN**

**(4) Which community groups or stakeholders will be key to the implementation of the initiatives and projects noted in this section? *(Answer Space 4,000 characters)***

The Town will work to provide an environment of accessibility and housing choice to the sustainable community area. This effort will be led by the workgroup in close coordination with Harford County Housing Agency, Harford County Community Services, Habitat for Humanity, Harford County Office of Aging, Harford Family House, FCCAU and Harford County Office of Sustainability to identify housing opportunities for all income levels and physical challenges.

## **IV. SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY ACTION PLAN**

### **E. Support transportation efficiency and access.**

**(1) What policies, strategies and projects are envisioned to strengthen the transportation network that affects the proposed SC Area? How will these initiatives support transportation choices (including walking, bicycling, bus or rail transit, and carpooling) or otherwise promote an efficient transportation network that integrates housing and transportation land uses? (Answer Space 4,000 characters)**

A close working relationship exists between the Maryland State Highway Administration and the Town. Given the existence of US Route 1, MD Route 22, MD Route 924 and MD Route 24 bisecting the Town into several parts, there is a great importance placed upon providing safe and convenient places to cross these arterial roadways. This will be the first step in planning pedestrian and bicycle linkages throughout the municipality. The Ma&Pa Trail is also an integral part of this plan given the last planned connection is left unfinished is through the Town.

- Emphasize the use of feeder routes from the residential communities to commercial areas that promote safe vehicular, bicycle and pedestrian travel.
- Encourage walking by providing a safe and prominent sidewalk and crosswalk system. This should include when possible the Safe Routes to School and other programs to enhance pedestrian safety and opportunities in Bel Air.
- Improve sidewalk system by assuring adequate design standards. These should address grade, cross slope, width, passing space, vertical clearance, grates, gaps, drainage, obstacles, surface requirements and ADA compliance.
- Update the Development Regulations requirements for bike racks and bicycle-related amenities to encourage bicycle use.
- Work with Harford County to integrate the existing transit system into the Town and investigate the possibility of additional park and ride locations within Town limits.
- Work with the County and State to develop expanded transit services and park and ride opportunities to meet area citizens' needs.
- Continue to emphasize use of the Town's Neighborhood Traffic Calming program as a means of reducing traffic speed and volume.
- Coordinate development plans with pertinent State and County agencies to assure road improvements are designed and implemented in a timely and efficient manner.

#### **IV. SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY ACTION PLAN**

**(2) If applicable, describe the SC Area's connection or proximity to transportation centers (e.g. Metro, MARC, and light rail stations) and describe opportunities for Transit - Oriented Development (TOD). Will Plan strategies and projects contribute to jobs/housing balance or otherwise provide a mix of land uses that can be expected to reduce reliance on single-occupancy automobiles? (If transit or TOD is not applicable in your community, all points in this section will be based on questions 1 and 3) (Answer Space 4,000 characters)**

While Bel Air does not have a train station or immediate access to rail traffic nor do we control the bus service in the Town, it is our goal to provide access to the stations in Aberdeen and Edgewood and to provide convenient access to bus services.

The Town will create policies and initiate programs to effectively address the need for transit oriented development and alternative modes of transportation throughout the Town including:

- Improving bypass functionality of Route 24 and east-west traffic movement around the Town: Extensions of West MacPhail Road and Route 22 could provide alternatives to using the US 1 Business corridor as a connection to Route 24; and improved close-in "bypasses" with connections to the US 1 Bypass are needed to serve traffic generated in the northern and western sectors of Bel Air. These bypasses include the Moores Mill/Vale Road corridor and the Prospect Mill/MD 23 corridor.
- Identifying funding sources for transportation network improvements.
- Establishing a parking authority to control leased and purchased commercial parking.
- Encouraging local citizen use of current transit services and alternative transit options.
- Scheduling, coordinating and implementing identified transportation improvements in a timely and efficient manner to assure the transportation network meets the Town's mobility, accessibility, safety and economic and quality of life needs.
- Evaluating a Town trolley for workday transportation between downtown and the mall. By offering stops at each end of Main Street and stops at each end of the Mall, a trolley system encourages connectivity between the businesses within the two commercial areas and would benefit residents and business owners alike. This alternative method of transportation would encourage business owners to open shops on Main Street and create opportunities for growth in the downtown. A trolley would aid in reducing congestion on the route and help with downtown parking. Providing weekday service would offer an affordable alternative to driving, and would provide a transportation solution for downtown residents getting to jobs in the Mall and Main Street areas, thus making Main Street residency a more attractive option. Adding a trolley addresses issues such as reduction of our carbon footprint, roadway congestion and gasoline consumption, while paying homage to our past with a historic style vehicle in a historic downtown environment – a perfect partnership. Tying our past to our future creates a stronger sense of community and increases the quality of life for our residents and business owners.

There are quite a few general and medical offices, banks, and retailers in the Route 1 and Route 24 intersection where the mall is located. Most importantly, within walking distance to the mall is the Upper Chesapeake Hospital, which is the second largest private employer in Harford County, with over 2,720 employees. If a trolley was available at the Mall and, possibly the hospital, it could take these workers to shop on Main Street at lunch-time, for example, and they would not lose their coveted spot in the busy hospital parking lot.

However, we would not develop a trolley system that would compromise the Harford Transit ridership level. Other considerations include having a trolley that only operates during holidays; for example, one that runs on the Saturday after Thanksgiving or the last Saturday before Christmas. We will work with Harford Transit to ensure that any transportation options we implement are ones that enhance, versus detract, from their mission and objectives.

**IV. SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY ACTION PLAN**

**(3) Which community groups or stakeholders will be key to the implementation of the initiatives and projects noted in this section?** *(Answer Space 4,000 characters)*

The Town will work with the Maryland State Highway Administration, Harford County Transit, Harford County Public Schools, Harford County Public Works and Harford County Office of Sustainability to prioritize programs, identify public works projects and funding sources, coordinate capital improvements and study the changing transportation needs of the community to provide the most user friendly and accessible transportation network possible.

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## **IV. SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY ACTION PLAN**

### **F. Coordinating and Leveraging Policies and Investment**

**(1) What specific steps will the Sustainable Community Workgroup take to coordinate policies and funding streams to remove barriers to investment and maximize and increase funding in the proposed Sustainable Community Area? (Answer Space 4,000 characters)**

The Town understands that none of the goals and objectives outlined can be achieved without financial and logistical support. It is the desire to maximize the investment of private funds by removing needless barriers to development and capitalize on public funding opportunities by tailoring our planning priorities to sustainable solutions. The workgroup will coordinate closely with Planning and Economic Development to identify improvement needs and potential funding opportunities.

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#### **IV. SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY ACTION PLAN**

**(2) How is the proposed Sustainable Community Plan consistent with other existing community or comprehensive plans? (Answer Space 4,000 characters)**

The proposed Sustainable Community Action Plan is consistent with the Town of Bel Air's Comprehensive Plan. The Comprehensive Plan has identified visions that support the Sustainable Community goals and objectives.

- a. Development is concentrated in suitable areas
- b. Sensitive areas are protected
- c. In rural areas, growth is directed to existing population centers and resource areas are protected
- d. Stewardship of the Chesapeake Bay and the land as a universal ethic
- e. Conservation of resources, including a reduction of resource consumption is practiced
- f. To assure the achievement of items a-e, economic growth is encouraged and regulatory mechanisms are streamlined
- g. Adequate public facilities and infrastructure under the control of the County or municipal incorporation are available or planned in areas where growth is to occur
- h. Funding mechanisms are addressed to achieve these visions

**IV. SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY ACTION PLAN**

**(3) How will the Plan help leverage and/or sustain more private sector investments?** *(Answer Space 4,000 characters)*

The plan as contemplated will help streamline development approval, create predictability for development , provide avenues for public-private partnership and support a stable residential and commercial atmosphere for future investment. There are many incentive programs and opportunities with the proposed Sustainable Community Area to attract private investment and there is adequate infrastructure to service all the parcels within the designated area. The character of Bel Air creates an atmosphere that is attractive to potential residents and businesses.



## **V. PROGRESS MEASURES**

### **For the Plan parts of section IV (A through F):**

#### **(1) List the specific outcomes that the Plan seeks to produce. (Answer Space 4,000 characters)**

##### **1) Specific Outcomes and Benchmarks**

The Town through the Sustainable Communities Workgroup will monitor progress of the Sustainable Communities Action Plan and use the following goals and objectives as a basis measure the successful implementation:

- Establishment of an effective Workgroup that will meet on a bi-annual basis to review each area of emphasis and assess if the stated goals have been achieved.
- Areas of Emphasis
  - Environment – progress towards establishment of:
    - Comprehensive Storm Water Management Plan
    - Repairs of Sewer based on Inflow & Infiltration study results
    - Implementation of recommendations of the Source Water Protection study
    - Continued street tree plantings based on Tree Plan
    - Changes to code based on sustainable goals and incentives
    - Repair of stream channels and daylighting of piped streams
  - Community – progress towards
    - Creation of brochures and web-based information for Historical, Cultural and Educational elements in Bel Air
- Air
  - Expand participation in the Arts & Entertainment District
  - Expand cooperative efforts between the Town and local schools
  - Expand number of Designated Historical structures in the Town and those obtaining tax credit allowances
  - Prepare Bicycle/Pedestrian Connectivity Plan
  - Complete link in Ma&Pa Trail
  - Economy – Address
    - Create wayfinding system within the downtown area
    - Establish a gallery, boutique hotel, and more retail uses in downtown
    - Initiate the Armory Marketplace business incubator effort in the garage spaces next to Reckord Armory
    - Expand the Farmers Market to the downtown area
    - Establish a business assistance team
    - Enhance the Town website to foster economic development and tourism
  - Housing – Progress towards
    - Develop an Adaptive Reuse Site Inventory
    - Establish the first Habitat House in the Town of Bel Air
    - Identify all transit stops in Bel Air and provide signs, seating, bike rack, trash receptacles and curb markings
    - Create a Rental Registry
    - Incentivize code to retain historic facades
  - Transportation – Progress towards
    - Establish 'Complete Street' standard for selected collectors
    - Establish a Parking Authority
    - Initiate a Trolley within the downtown
    - Create safe crossings of Route 22, Route 24, Route 924, and US Route 1
    - Assist Harford County Transit in creating awareness of services in Bel Air
  - Coordination – Movement towards
    - Identify Grants and Funding sources at the State and Federal level
    - Work with private and quasi-private organizations to maximize investment in the Community
    - Enforce community benefit requirements for new development
    - Create plans and exhibits to better communicate projects that will fulfill the goals and objectives of the Sustainable Communities Area

**V. PROGRESS MEASURES**

**(2) And, list the specific benchmarks that will be used to measure progress toward these outcomes.** *(Answer Space 4,000 characters)*

The Outcomes and Benchmarks will be readdressed when the workgroup meets in six months.

**REPLACE THIS PAGE WITH**  
**LOCAL GOVERNMENT SUPPORT**  
**RESOLUTIONS**

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**SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY APPLICATION  
DISCLOSURE AUTHORIZATION AND CERTIFICATION**

The undersigned authorizes the Department of Housing and Community Development (the "Department") to make such inquiries as necessary, including, but not limited to, credit inquiries, in order to verify the accuracy of the statements made by the applicant and to determine the creditworthiness of the applicant.

In accordance with Executive Order 01.01.1983.18, the Department advises you that certain personal information is necessary to determine your eligibility for financial assistance. Availability of this information for public inspection is governed by Maryland's Access to Public Records Act, State Government Article, Section 10-611 et seq. of the Annotated Code of Maryland (the "Act"). This information will be disclosed to appropriate staff of the Department or to public officials for purposes directly connected with administration of this financial assistance program for which its use is intended. Such information may be shared with State, federal or local government agencies, which have a financial role in the project. You have the right to inspect, amend, or correct personal records in accordance with the Act.

The Department intends to make available to the public certain information regarding projects recommended for funding in the Sustainable Community Plan. The information available to the public will include the information in this application, as may be supplemented or amended. This information may be confidential under the Act. If you consider this information confidential and do not want it made available to the public, please indicate that in writing and attach the same to this application.

You agree that not attaching an objection constitutes your consent to the information being made available to the public and a waiver of any rights you may have regarding this information under the Act.

**I have read and understand the above paragraph. Applicant's Initials:** \_\_\_\_\_

Anyone who knowingly makes, or causes to be made, any false statement or report relative to this financial assistance application, for the purposes of influencing the action of the Department on such application, is subject to immediate cancellation of financial assistance and other penalties authorized by law.

The undersigned hereby certifies that the Sustainable Communities Plan or Project(s) proposed in this Application can be accomplished and further certifies that the information set herein and in any attachment in support hereof is true, correct, and complete to the best of his/her knowledge and belief.

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Authorized Signature

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Print Name and Title

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Date